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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Block Quotes Only:

[1](#). Prime Minister Netanyahu's Speech

I: "For Obama's Ears
Senior columnist Nahum Barnea wrote in the mass-circulation,
pluralist Yediot Aharonot (6/15): "Three words will remain from the

speech at Bar Ilan University: "demilitarized Palestinian state."
... They clarify that if there should be a resolution to the conflict, that is what it will look like. Not autonomy, not something less than a state, not annexation to Israel, not a return to Egyptian or Jordanian sovereignty. ... Netanyahu's speech was meant for one pair of ears - the most prominent and famous pair in the world: the ears of Barack Obama. Netanyahu, through his own fault, got into a stalemate in his relationship with the president of the United States. The speech was written as a rescue tool. Netanyahu calculated the manner in which the White House would receive his speech so carefully that he took the trouble to telephone Vice President Joseph Biden at 5:00 PM yesterday afternoon to tell him its main points.... Netanyahu wrote a speech that brought together everything that is considered a consensus in Jewish public opinion in Israel: the blood-soaked narrative of the history of the Jewish people and settlement in the Land of Israel, the feeling of victimization and the aspiration for peace (the word "peace" was uttered in the speech more than any other word), national unity, the emphasis on the state's Jewish character, and the supremacy of security considerations. Even two contradictory values - a Palestinian state and the settlers - were brought into the consensus. All were his children."

II. "You Have to Start Somewhere"

Ben Caspit, senior diplomatic correspondent, wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (6/15): "It was one small step for the peace process, one giant leap for Binyamin Netanyahu. Even the most difficult of treks has to start somewhere.... Netanyahu took his first small and hesitant step.... If Netanyahu had the slightest belief that there was some chance that the Palestinians would be capable of acquiescing to any of the conditions he had set, he would have refrained from saying what he did.... The right wing will say today that now the slippery slope has begun, the left wing will say that this was too little, too late, but what is really important is what the Americans will say. They are saying that this is an important first step. Now they are waiting for additional ones. In the end' he uttered those horrible words, what he had only alluded to until today. He said "Palestinian state" and was able to remain alive. Looked to his right, looked to his left, felt for his vital organs and realized much to his amazement: everything is still where it should be, in peace (and security)."

III. "A Big Step for Netanyahu, a Small Step for the Middle East"

Pundit Sima Kadmon wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yedioth Ahronot (6/15): "It was a big step for Netanyahu, and a small step for the Middle East. It was a big step for Netanyahu because one does not have to be an expert in body language in order to see how difficult it was for him, physically, to utter the words. And one does not have to be a psychologist in order to understand that Netanyahu did not reach an internal realization... that this is what needs to be done. Rather, it was forced upon him.... In other words, the man who until recently was considered a media wizard, the number-one public-relations man of the State of Israel, an eloquent and charismatic speaker in a class by himself, looked much less sure of himself and, almost ironically, much more real.... But even if Netanyahu looked like someone who vomited the words, even if he wrapped them in conditions and reservations that one doubts will ever come true, he said it. Binyamin Netanyahu accepted the two-state principle, and so felt the last bastion of the right wing.... It was certainly a courageous speech.... It is true that all Netanyahu did was to throw the ball into the Palestinians' court with the clear knowledge that they would not be able to deliver the goods."

IV: "What He Did Not Say"

Shimon Shiffer, senior diplomatic correspondent, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yedioth Ahronot (6/15): "In Binyamin Netanyahu's Bar Ilan speech one must pay attention to what he did not say together with what he did.... He deliberately chose not to mention other subjects at all.... Netanyahu mentioned the two words "Palestinian state," but did so in a negative, conditional context.... The second time, he said, "We cannot be expected to agree in advance to the principle of a Palestinian state without assurance of its demilitarization." The third and most important time, he said, "If the Palestinians recognize Israel as the state of the Jewish people, we will be willing, in a future agreement, to reach a solution of a demilitarized Palestinian state alongside the

Jewish state."... [Netanyahu] settled for a mention of "Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, will remain united" without mentioning the words "Israeli sovereignty," which he used a great deal in the past every time the subject of Jerusalem was mentioned. Netanyahu refrained from making clear statements even on the subject of halting construction in the settlements... Netanyahu sufficed with a vague statement that "It is necessary to allow the residents to live normal lives, to allow mothers and fathers to bring up their children like in all other families in the world."... The Obama administration's unequivocal demand that Israel dismantle the outposts did not get even a trace of a mention from Netanyahu. ... He said that Netanyahu did not want to open a new front with the settlers because, among other reasons, he believes that the outposts will be evacuated in the end, either by agreement or by force. The Golan Heights were not mentioned at all, either. It is possible that Netanyahu believes that at the moment, the American administration does not expect him to open a front in his coalition regarding Syria, or that the Americans believe that Bashar Assad should be allowed to sweat first under their demand that he stop supporting terrorism. It is also possible that Netanyahu wanted to hint that he is willing to negotiate. The person not mentioned in the speech was Palestinian Authority Chairman Abu Mazen. Netanyahu mentioned the Palestinian Authority, but not its chairman. He did take the trouble to mention the names of the president of Egypt and King Abdullah of Jordan."

V: "Netanyahu's Ideological About-face"

Senior Diplomatic Correspondent Aluf Benn wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (6/15): "Last night, Benjamin Netanyahu underwent an ideological reversal in two important areas. First, the prime minister accepted the idea of a Palestinian state as the basis for a peace agreement after vehemently opposing it for years.... Netanyahu is now joining the international consensus with respect to the idea of "two states for two peoples." ... The second major change is that Netanyahu insisted that America guarantee a future security arrangement in the West Bank so that a Palestinian state does not turn into "Hamastan." He hinted at the deployment of U.S. soldiers at border crossings, and even within the territory of a future state, to protect Israel from existential dangers.... Obama will have to decide whether what Netanyahu offered him yesterday will be enough to prod Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas into renewing negotiations, or whether the American leader must now embark on another campaign of pressure and arm-twisting vis-a-vis his Israeli counterpart to achieve the results he seeks."

VI. "Reality Check: Netanyahu's Lost Opportunity"

Jeff Barak, former editor-in-chief of The Jerusalem Post, wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (6/15): "Netanyahu had the worst of all worlds last night. He annoyed right-wing Likud MKs and his right-wing coalition allies by accepting... the future existence of a Palestinian state while failing... to win Washington's approval for his new stance. ... Netanyahu is allowing Israel to become enmeshed in an argument with Washington that endangers Israel's most vital interests.... Frittering away US and western support for Israel over the issue of a few houses here and there in the West Bank is irresponsible in the extreme. ... By failing to offer a convincing vision last night, Netanyahu... is going to find himself being dragged by the United States into a Middle East peace process he does not want, and in which he is viewed with suspicion by all sides. ... Netanyahu should have showed his willingness to play his part in helping move the peace process forward with a clear suggestion for breaking the current impasse... His refusal to do so will prove costly to Israel in the months to come."

VII: "Reconciliation"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (6/15): "Did Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's speech at Bar-Ilan University last night outlining his vision of Arab-Israeli peace satisfy mainstream Israelis? Did it contribute to shaping an Israeli consensus? The answer: Yes.... Netanyahu announced his support for a demilitarized Palestinian state. The territorial details will need to be negotiated. And the Palestinian leadership will have to recognize Israel as a Jewish state, and abandon the demand to resettle in it millions of descendants of the original 650,000 Arab refugees from the War of Independence. This offer - coming from a

Likud leader - is momentous. Now the ball is in the Arab court. ... Netanyahu's speech demonstrated that Israeli governments honor the commitments of their predecessors.... Netanyahu was right to say that settlements are not the main obstacle to peace. While most Israelis do not support unauthorized outposts, they do want to find a reasonable compromise with the US over natural growth in settlements that Israel intends to retain under a permanent accord....Now is the time for Israelis to pull together, for the national interest to take precedence over partisan preferences. Above all, now is the time for the US to persuade the Palestinians to return to the negotiating table and pursue Netanyahu's call for a viable reconciliation."

VIII: "40 Years Too Late"

Pundit Yaron London wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (6/15): "This speech should have been delivered by the leader of the Israeli right some 40 years ago. If it had been delivered some 30 years ago, there may also still have been some use to it. Even two decades ago. Perhaps. Now it's too late. The historic hour has been missed.... The reason for this is the dominant spirit that governs the Jewish people. This spirit, sometimes quiet, sometimes turbulent, pushes us towards territorial expansion and dictates Israel's policies.... We never give up one piece of occupied land unless severely wounded in the battlefield or unless the world powers make it clear that we have no other choice.... Each time the price we are forced to pay grows higher. This time the price will be tens of thousands of Israelis who will be forced to leave their homes. This is a heavy burden, which we shall refuse to pay, unless faced with an even worse alternative. Some temptation, and even a charming temptation like peace with the Arabs, will not be sufficient to convince us.... Only threats or a devastating defeat of some sort will serve to convince us. Without these there will be no government in Israel that will step up to the task. They will talk, mumble, dispense promises, remove a shed or two from some hill, destroy by fire some olive groves, and then continue building. This is the important point. All the rest is nonsense and folly.

XI: "The Unifier"

Ari Shavit, senior pundit, wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (6/15): "Benjamin Netanyahu crossed the Rubicon yesterday. In order to serve the country, he abandoned his father's ideological home.... Netanyahu did the right thing... he placed the spotlight squarely on one irreplaceable phrase: a demilitarized Palestinian state next to a Jewish State of Israel.... Bibi Netanyahu's message yesterday was one of unity. Bibi, who in the past was seen as divisive, yesterday became a unifier of Israel. He put on the table a clear, realistic and precise diplomatic formula that reflects the worldview of the Israeli majority... he proved that he is not a politician but a statesman.... Netanyahu's new truth is not that of Peace Now.... However, this bitter truth is... being translated into two principles whose morality is incontrovertible: recognition of the Jewish state and demilitarization of the Palestinian state. These two principles have now been laid before the White House. If Obama refuses to accept them, we will all know that we are facing an American president who is no longer committed to the existence of the State of Israel. But if Obama does accept these two principles and grants Israel international guarantees for peace, he will prove himself a genuine peace leader - a leader who will pave the way to the correct, stable solution of two nation-states: a Jewish state and a Palestinian one.

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